

APPENDIX 1

Public and Peer Review Panel Comments

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Appendix 1-3a
Author's Response to Comments on Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Introduction to the 2001 Everglades Consolidated Report

Responses to Public and Peer Review Comments

Prepared by Garth Redfield

Comments from the "Final Report of the Peer Review Panel for the 2001 Everglades Consolidated Report"

- **Panel Comments Directed Primarily at Future Reports**

Comment: “The panel feels a better job could be done to coordinate inter-chapter and appendix material. Rather than treat each chapter as an individual document, the coordinator of the whole Report should be given more authority to integrate the document. Basically, each year’s report would begin with a brief status report of the subject area. The authors of each chapter would then identify the most important issues for that year and spend the bulk of the report focusing on those. In this way, each year’s report is both a continual status report and a tracking of central issues and responses. The public workshops could also be organized around these issue themes with fewer status report presentations.”

Response: The District and Department recognize the need to pay particular attention to central themes and current technical issues. Both agencies will continue to guide authors and conduct editing towards a more integrated product. However, given the broad reporting requirements of this Report and the incredibly short time frames available for integrating chapters, there are real constraints on how much can be done to make the Report flow as an integrated volume.

Comment: “Further, while the panel recognizes a need to keep the length of the Report under a manageable size, it may be useful to rethink the use of previous reports. Critical information was spread across a number of sources, making review difficult.”

Response: Each year the type and amount of material in chapter narratives and in appendices will vary in response to reporting requirements and current issues. The Project Manager, Editors and Authors will attempt to make chapters as self-explanatory as possible in future reports, placing material in Appendices only when essential for permit compliance or when very detailed accounts would make the chapters unwieldy. The authors will be strongly encouraged to focus the chapters on key issues, minimizing status reports and the need for extensive background material in appendices.

Comment: Finally, regarding the review process, for complicated topics such as mercury, secondary reviewers should be assigned specific issues (such as atmosphere cycling, internal cycling, fate and biological effects, and modeling), rather than serve as a reviewer of a whole chapter.

Response: This comment is very understandable since several of the chapters in the ECR are both complex and diverse in subject matter. The District and DEP will make panel assignments more specific in future peer reviews to assist in focussing review effort. However, there must always be a lead reviewer to sort out and prioritize comments on the various chapters and broad reading of the Report is essential for the review to be placed in appropriate context. The use of disciplinary reviewers for the 2001 process was a first attempt to get more in-depth reviewing on critical areas; disciplinary reviewers will continue to be used as needed in future reviewers.

- **Panel Comments on “Peer Reviewing” the Report**

Comment: “When ‘peer reviewing’ a report, written in part as an annual summary of water quality standard compliance, there is a question as to the exact purpose of the review. Is the review to simply determine the appropriateness of the methods selected to conduct the standard compliance assessment? Or is the review to seek consistency in use of methods to insure that managers receive information that is comparable from year to year?”

Response: Although most of these comments in this section of the Panel Report were directed at standards compliance in Chapter 4, the theme of what is being ‘peer reviewed’ is a generic comment worthy of consideration here. Both the District and Department believe strongly that the peer review process provides expert guidance to the agencies on how best to handle complex data and findings. It acts as a quality assurance mechanism for technical information to be used for important decisions in resource management. Finally, the peer review and public workshop process allows diverse input from the public facilitated by a panel of objective experts. Over time, we fully expect this process to lead naturally to changes in how information is analyzed and presented. Although this may lead to some discontinuities in year to year comparisons, authors will attempt to bridge data analyses across years.

The Panel is correct in pointing out that data collection and analytical methods are essentially set and not easily altered through the review process. On the other hand, comments from the panel on how data are generated are always welcome and will be carried down the data stream as far as possible to make improvements in how information is collected and interpreted. Getting expert advice on how to do a better job in monitoring and analyzing data is very important to the long-term credibility of the agencies and additional review activities addressing fundamental approaches warranted. The major initiatives and data collection efforts in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is being carefully planned and reviewed. They should represent a quantum step forward in communicating information to decision-makers.

Comment: “A statement placing the Everglades planning process in national and global contexts may be important. Noting that other efforts to manage wetlands are benefiting from the Everglades process should be considered. It is obvious that scientists and managers from other parts of the world have a great interest in the work of the District. District personnel have an interest in research being conducted and the resultant management strategies (integrated air, land and water management) and policies being developed as a result of this work (for example, New Zealand, Brazil, and South Africa efforts to develop integrated natural resource management policies and strategies).”

Response: We agree with these thoughts and have added a paragraph to Chapter 1 linking Everglades restoration to other efforts internationally.

Comment: “It is not clear in reading the section on the Everglades Stormwater Program that the referred-to eight basins (not included in the Everglades Construction Project) are also subject to the default P limits noted on page 1-18 “Rulemaking”. This should be clarified as many members of the public may study this chapter in more detail than other parts of the report. “

Response: A sentence has been added to clarify the applicability of P criteria to the ESP basins.

Comments: **Recommendations**

1. A summary of this chapter should continue to be provided as part of the public hearing process as a means of orienting the public to the region under consideration.

Response: We agree fully and will continue to place Chapter 1 on the agenda.

2. Page 1-6, Florida Bay. It might help reader understanding if an approximate extension of the Bay was indicated in a dashed line.

Response: The map has been modified with an approximate border for Florida Bay.

3. Page 1-9, paragraph 2, last sentence, “A general goal of the Everglades Consolidated Report is to improve public understanding of these programs and the science that supports decisions derived from the programs” should be slightly revised and be the lead statement in the report. “A general goal of the Everglades Consolidated Report is to improve public understanding of management actions and projects and the science that supports decisions derived from the approved planning process.”

Response: We feel that the suggested sentence is unclear and does not convey the correct message on the value of the ECR.

4. Page 1-13, paragraph 1, last two sentences, “To meet this deadline... potential remedies” is so fundamental to public understanding of the complexity of the planning process that it should be highlighted. In fact, the entire paragraph is fundamental to engendering broad public understanding and support.

Response: We agree and have added a subheading to highlight this paragraph.

Comments provided before the public workshop on the Web Board

- **Richard A. Meganck, Organization of American States**
Chapter 1: Introduction to the 2001 Everglades Consolidated Report

Comment: Page 1-2, In the opening paragraph of The Geographic Setting section a figure of 2 million acres is used to delimit the Everglades. In subsequent paragraphs km² is used. I would suggest adjusting the 2 million acre figure to km² in order to allow a mental comparison of the size of the sub-units (Everglades National Park, WCAs, etc.) to the total area. Better yet include both acres/sq. miles and hectares/km² as was done in the text of WCA 1, WCA 2A, 2B and WCA 3A, 3B throughout the report.

Response: Changes have been made giving land area for the whole EPA.

Comment: Page 1-6, Florida Bay. It might help reader understanding if an approximate extension of the Bay was indicated in a dashed line.

Response: Addressed above as part of Final Panel Report.

Comment: Page 1-9, paragraph 2, last sentence, “A general goal of the Everglades Consolidated Report is to improve public understanding of these programs and the science that supports decisions derived from the programs” should be slightly revised and be the lead statement in the report. “A general goal of the Everglades Consolidated Report is to improve public understanding of management actions and projects and the science that supports decisions derived from the approved planning process”.

Response: Addressed above as part of Final Panel Report.

Comment: Page 1-11, paragraph 2, I find the last sentence of this paragraph “These environmental impacts...” to be a very important statement. I assume that the references used in the previous sentence also support this statement. If so, I suggest moving the citations to the end of the paragraph. This will add support to the SFWMD reports already cited.

Response: These citations support individual studies of impacts to various components of the Everglades and are distinct from the more general references on the overall problem and its origins.

Comment: Page 1-13, paragraph 1, last two sentences, “To meet this deadline... potential remedies” is so fundamental to public understanding of the complexity of the planning process that I feel it should be highlighted somehow (bold, underline). In fact the entire paragraph is fundamental to engendering broad public understanding and support.

Response: Addressed above as part of Final Panel Report.

Comment: Page 1-21, Everglades Stormwater Program. It is not clear to me if the referred-to eight basins (not included in the Everglades Construction Project) are also subject to the default P limits noted on page 1-18 “Rulemaking” which will go into effect 31/Xii/03 if the numeric P limits are not agreed to by that time.

Response: Addressed above as part of Final Panel Report.